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Published in:
Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research

Publication date:
2016

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The final published version is available direct from the publisher website at:
[10.1016/j.jveb.2016.08.042](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2016.08.042)

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Citation for published version (APA):
Dumbell, L., & Lewis, V. L. (2016). Taking the reins: Communication strategies to prompt change in riders' training practices. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research*, 15, 87-88.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2016.08.042>

TAKING THE REINS: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO PROMPT CHANGE IN RIDERS' TRAINING PRACTICES

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Education programmes have been shown to have immediate outcomes in learning, skill development and positive behaviour change and positive long-term effects. This study explored what communication strategy might encourage educated riders to try a new training practice. Semi-structured interviews of eight riders currently employed as higher education educators were conducted. Interviews covered the communication format, the communicator's characteristics and the information approach that would encourage the participant to try a new training approach. Themes were identified using thematic content analysis without third-party verification. Participants felt that they would be most likely to try a new approach within a self-initiated personal training situation (personal exposure). They were unlikely to try something where they had not viewed the effects, either through personal experience or a demonstration (either live or video) (viewing the effects). The communicator had to inspire trust (trust) and all participants valued practical experience although its form varied between participants (experience). If participants already had prior positive knowledge of the communicator or the information they would be more likely to try a new training approach (previous exposure). To be tried, a training approach should be complementary to already held knowledge and experience (complementary) and framed within a context of personal relevance, e.g. holding a problem's solution (context). These findings suggest a challenging strategy of personal and visual, resonant communication methods at a relevant moment is required if the ISES Principles of training are to be widely adopted.

Keywords: *communication; equine; education; experience; training.*